

Aussie culture entices Magali

By John Pickford

FRENCH-BORN STOKERS Siding resident Magali McDuffie was just eight years old when she came to the conclusion she would migrate to this country and marry an Australian.

"It all began when my mother gave me a book about a French family who toured Australia. "Kookaburras fascinated me; I read it many, many times and knew I had to migrate here," according to Magali, whose name is common in the Occitan district of southern France.

Now aged 32, Magali earned her "ticket" to Australia in her 22nd year, when she became a trained linguist able to speak German, Belgian and English in addition to her native tongue. After arriving in Australia, she also gained a degree in film-making.

Magali and her husband, a Sydney academic, later moved to Stokers Siding in search of a change of lifestyle.

"This 21-acre property in Kookaburra Court (that bird name again) proved to be paradise," she said.

However, she tragically lost her husband of eight years when he died from a sudden heart attack in 2008.

Magali said film making, looking after her daughter and working with governments and Aboriginal communities kept her busy and mainly took her mind off her loss.

She has worked with the Byron and Tweed councils and recently made a documentary about Chinese migration in the area.

"Some weeks it is difficult to plan. One week I'm working for National Geographic, the next it's drag racing. Then there's my work with the Aboriginal communities both here and in the Kimberleys in Western Australia," she said.

"The latter is my main passion now. I have noticed they have a huge amount of cultural capital and that racism, especially institutional



LEFT: French film-maker and trained linguist Magali McDuffie at her Stokers Siding home, fulfilling her childhood dream of living in Australia.

racism, is still a problem in Australia.

"Also, the media generally gives negative images of Aborigines, which is why I want to make films on all the positive things they do."

She has worked with the Nganduwal-Minjungbal people of the Tweed, who belong to the wider Bundjalung nation, and with the Nyikina People in WA.

"I feel very privileged to be involved in this work, but I do not comment on their culture and am always cautious when it comes to cultural protocol," she said.

"I will not offend communities who have given me their trust, and taught me so much."

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Magali said she hoped to make films about some of the wonderful things happening in Aboriginal communities, like running their own clinics, cultural centres and wilderness programs. "There are wonderful things happening and I want to document that," she said. "It's one thing to visit for one or two weeks but quite another experience to live with Aborigines."

There's another string to Magali's bow. She makes a mean crepe and they will be available for tasting during a fund-raiser at the Stokers Dunbible Hall during the next couple of months.